

# VOCATIONAL AND PROFESSIONAL MONOGRAPHS

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## *Book Publishing*

By

**Grace Bechtold**

The Macmillan Company  
New York, New York



**BELLMAN PUBLISHING COMPANY, INC.**  
**BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS**

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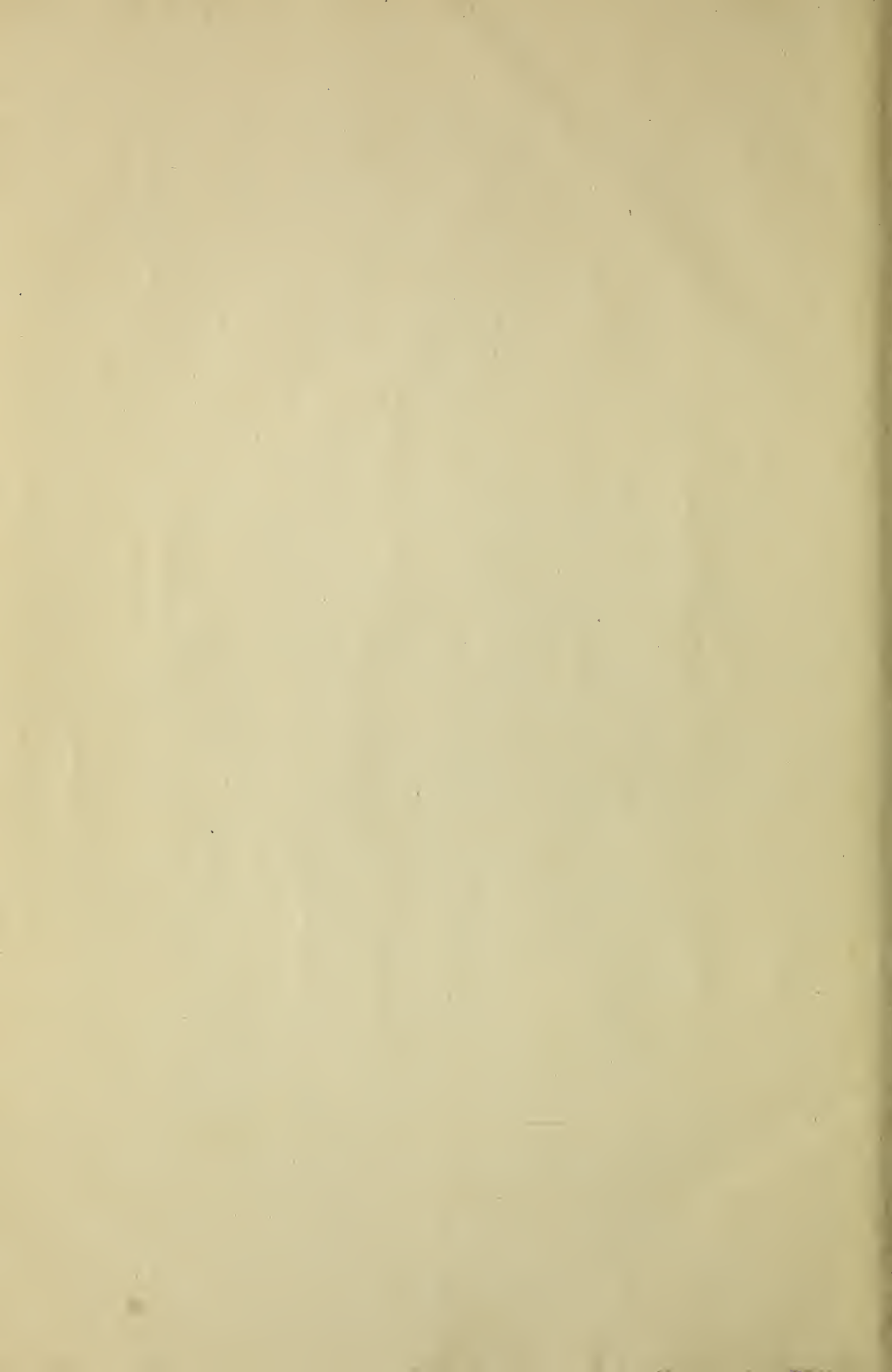
## BOOK PUBLISHING

### Grace Bechtold

Grace Bechtold was born in a small town in Illinois, in 1909. She grew up in the Middlewest in a family of book lovers, her maternal grandfather, Dr. Charles Romeyn Dake, having achieved a small success as author of short stories and a book, "A Strange Discovery," which was published by Stone and Kimball, in 1893. Miss Bechtold attended the University of Illinois, and her first job was in the promotion department of Scott, Foresman and Company, educational publishers, in Chicago. From there she joined the staff of a large advertising agency in Chicago.

Like most young people interested in careers having to do with books and writing, she had always regarded New York as her Mecca. In 1938 she finally achieved her goal and settled in that city, a move she has had no cause to regret.

For the past seven years Miss Bechtold has been connected with the Trade Editorial Department of The Macmillan Company. Beginning as a secretary to one of the Associate Editors, she is now an editor herself. She attributes whatever success she may have had to the wise and patient guidance of her Editor-in-Chief, Mr. Harold S. Latham.



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## BOOK PUBLISHING

### I. The History of Book Publishing.

#### (a) Origin of Printing.

While a form of printing called block printing (a slow and laborious process not unlike wood engraving) was known in Europe as early as the fourteenth century, and in China nearly six centuries before that, the invention of movable type can be considered, for the purposes of this brief study, as the beginning of modern printing.

In the middle of the fifteenth century, in Germany, Johann Gutenberg produced the famous Gutenberg Bible (1454) "without help of reed, stylus, or pen, but by the wondrous agreement, proportion and harmony of punches and types." This invention has been called, and quite rightly, the greatest invention of modern man and, indeed, it would be difficult to think of a single other invention which has so greatly affected the progress of mankind.

#### (b) The Beginning of English Printing.

The new invention quickly spread to all the countries of Europe. William Caxton brought it back to England from France, and in 1476 the first printed book was issued in the English language. During his lifetime, Caxton, one of the great printers of all time, produced Chaucer's "Canterbury Tales," Malory's "Morte d'Arthur," and other famous books which are read and esteemed to this day.

It was not long before Caxton had a host of imitators and while none of these achieved anything like the skill and artistry of the great master, books as we know them had become an integral part of English life.

As time went on, the printer-bookseller came into his own. Not only did the printer distribute the work from his own presses in his book shop, but he purchased the work of his fellow printers and added them to his stock. Thus the bookseller gradually superseded the printer, and it was not long before the latter was an employee of the former.

#### (c) The Bookseller.

Of the three principal agents—printer, bookseller and author—concerned with the production and distribution of books, the printer had his day in the sixteenth century. During the next century a change in the balance took place, and the bookseller came into his own.

An important reason for this change of emphasis lay in the Copyright Law of Queen Anne in 1709. Under this law for the first time, the property of an author was protected by the statute of his country and the printing of books without license was made too difficult and risky a matter for the enterprising pirate. It should be noted, however, that it was the bookseller and not the author who first saw the advantages of this law. Thus protected, the bookseller concentrated more and more of his efforts on securing new work and gradually he became first a publisher and then a bookseller.

The author continued to sell his work outright to the bookseller for a fixed price, realizing none of the profits, if the work became a huge success. There is, in this connection, the famous story of John Milton's "Paradise Lost" for which the author received five pounds down with the promise of a further five pounds if a second edition were warranted. The publisher, Samuel Simmons, made something like five or six times that amount.

#### (d) The Publisher.

This happy situation for the publisher was not, however, to last. The author was coming to be aware of his power and the publisher found him a force to be reckoned with. The struggle for mastery between printer and publisher had ended in a sweeping victory for the publisher. A sterner contest was beginning between author and publisher.

Among the first to recognize the rights of the author and bring respect to the business of literature, were Jacob Tonson and Bernard Lintot. Both were friends and patrons of their writers. It was in Jacob Tonson's shop, for example, that Swift first met Addison and Steele. Bernard Lintot, "the redoubtable rival of Mr. Tonson," was publisher and friend of many famous authors of the day, among others, Alexander Pope. In 1716, Thomas Longman I came to London to add his name to the history of the book trade and to found the firm which is in existence to this day. (Apropos the term "book trade," Boswell wrote: "As the physicians are called 'The Faculty,' and the Counsellors at Law 'The Profession,' the booksellers of London are called 'The Trade.' Johnson disapproved of these denominations." How the term, "trade," began it is difficult to determine. It is true, however, that to this day, books of a general nature intended for sale to the public as a whole are referred to as "trade books," whereas "trade magazines" has a quite different meaning, referring to magazines intended for a particular trade or industry or business group.)

While Tonson and Lintot brought dignity to book publishing, it remained for Robert Dodsley to introduce another ingredient, true literary instinct. Dodsley was an author of repute in his own right and no doubt this talent helped him to recognize the talents of others. But the most important reason for his success—and this is still a vital factor in any publisher's make-up—was his true sympathy and understanding of authors. Dodsley gathered about him the great writers of his day, including the formidable Samuel Johnson. In fact, to Dodsley is ascribed the credit of having first thought of the famous Dictionary which took Johnson seven long and harrassing years to complete.

#### (e) Children's Books.

It is not possible to leave the eighteenth century, the "golden age of publishing," without mention of another revered name—John Newbery. It is John Newbery for whom the Newbery Medal is named which is given annually in the United States for the best children's book of the year. Before the advent of this publisher, children's books consisted of very dull and unattractive "horn books" and "chap books" which were highly moral and righteous in tone. Newbery understood children better and issued his nursery classics—"Little Goody Two Shoes," "Giles Gingerbread," and so on. Newbery published adult books as well and will also be remembered as Goldsmith's publisher, having rescued him from the miserable fate of hack writer.

#### (f) Nineteenth Century English Publishing.

By the nineteen century, to quote the ever helpful Frank Mumby,\* upon whom this writer has leaned so heavily, "the publisher's drawing-room was now the centre of an appreciative crowd of authors."

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\*Mumby, F. A. "Publishing and Bookselling." Jonathan Cape. London. 1930.



It was in John Murray's drawing room that Byron and Scott met in 1815 and where later the "Memoirs" of Lord Byron were irrevocably burnt at the urgent request of his relatives and executors and to the loss of Murray, his publisher, and to all posterity.

This is not to imply that the publishers had lost any of their astuteness or business acumen, however. There is the famous story of Thomas Norton Longman III who said to a lady poet, "it is no good bringing me poetry; nobody wants poetry now. Bring me a cookery book, and we might come to terms." The lady, Mrs. Eliza Acton, did just that and returned soon after with "Modern Cookery" which sold with occasional revisions for fifty years.

Later in the century arose a whole new crop of publishers, among them the famous house of Macmillan who celebrated their centenary in 1943. Daniel and Alexander Macmillan were two young Scotsmen who came to London to seek their fortunes in the book trade. They were earnest young men of high principles who struck a happy balance between those two warring aspects of publishing—commercialism and idealism. Shortly after his arrival in London, Daniel wrote a friend: "We booksellers, if we are faithful to our task, are trying to destroy, and are helping to destroy, all kinds of confusion, and are aiding our great Taskmaster to reduce the world into order and beauty and harmony . . . At the same time, it is our duty to manage our affairs wisely, keeps our minds easy, and not trade beyond our means."

It is impossible in so brief a space to tell all the stories of the nineteenth century, much as they serve to illustrate the peculiar quality of publishing as a business. There was the firm of Hodder and Stoughton. William Heinemann became a great figure in publishing circles in the 1800's. The late eighties saw the beginning of the famous firm of A. & C. Black, publishers to this day of the English "Who's Who." John Cassell, with William and Robert Chambers and Charles Knight, pioneered in the field of cheap literature. John Lane's name must forever be associated with the artist and illustrator so famous in Victorian days, Aubrey Beardsley. There was Gerald Duckworth whose list ranged from Elinor Glyn to the Sitwells. This is to name only a few.

#### (g) The Present Century in England.

The twentieth century began auspiciously for English publishers until the first World War brought such problems as had never before confronted the book trade. After having weathered that disastrous period—four long years in England—the publishers found themselves with a greatly enlarged reading public eager for books on every conceivable subject except the war itself. The revival of interest in books about the war was not to occur until ten years later when books like Zweig's "Sergeant Grischka," Robert Sherriff's "Journey's End," and Remarque's "All Quiet on the Western Front" had such surprising and instantaneous successes.

It is to be noted, too, that it was the younger publishers whose names are connected with these "hits." To quote Mr. Mumby once again, "It was in the nature of things that books reflecting the spirit of the age should come from the new generation, led by men like Jonathan Cape, Stanley Unwin, Victor Gollancz, and Martin Secker. Most of the publishers who have made their mark since the War (World War I, that is) however, learned their craft with the older firms. If our history has taught us anything it is that the publishing house of one generation is the nursery of another. Book publishing, as Mr. Stanley Unwin says, in reveal-

ing its 'mysteries' is not such a simple task as is usually thought. 'It is only the man who has never mastered his job who is sure that he knows all there is about it.'

It is too soon, of course, to be able to make any comment on English publishing and its future since the end of World War II. Every indication is that once again, as in 1918, the book trade in England will meet the challenge of the new world.

## II. American Book Publishing.

### (a) Early Days.

In the colonial days, quite naturally, the struggling young colonists continued to look toward Britain as their spiritual home. Not only were all their books brought over from the mother country, but those colonists who were writing sent their manuscripts as a matter of course to England to be published.

In 1638, however, Jesse Glover, an Englishman, set sail for this country with his press and a printer, Stephen Daye. Glover did not survive the voyage, but his widow set up the first printing press in this country in Cambridge, Massachusetts, with the permission of Henry Dunster, the first president of Harvard. The first book to be printed on American soil was "The Whole Booke of Psalmes Faithfully Translated into English Metre," commonly referred to as the Bay Psalm Book. Its imprint is 1640.

For the rest, the history of colonial printing holds but little interest. There are a few outstanding names—William Bradford who set up the first printing press in Philadelphia; the brothers Franklin, James and Benjamin, the latter of whom issued a work of his own pen, "Poor Richard's Almanac," which achieved a wide sale but whose author was to make his name remembered for other activities besides his printing press.

After the Revolutionary War, Philadelphia was the unchallenged metropolis of the young Republic, much larger than New York or Boston. It was in Philadelphia that Matthew Carey emerged as the first great American publisher. While on the whole, America continued to look to England for cultural nourishment, the first movements toward American literature were being made and Matthew Carey pioneered in these stirrings towards literary independence.

### (b) The Nineteenth Century.

The foundations of American book publishing rest upon the English popular novels of the nineteenth century. There was at that time, of course, no international copyright and it was a simple matter for the American printer-bookseller to arrange for the early delivery of proofs, unbound sheets, or first copies, from which he could print as many American editions as he liked. Matthew Carey was not alone in seeing the large profits which were to be made by this transaction. The Harper brothers in New York also entered into the business of printing Scott, Byron, Bulwer-Lytton and other English "best-sellers" of the day and a lively competition developed between these two rival houses, the one in Philadelphia, the other in New York. The Harpers had the advantage, for the English books first had to land in New York, then be delivered to Philadelphia by stage.

It was a lively game. Henry Boynton in his "Annals of American Booksell-

ing,"\* quotes, from an earlier account, one of the incredible anecdotes of the measures taken to get the top cream of the market:—

"In 1836, Carey & Hart (formerly Matthew Carey) had received an advance copy of Bulwer's 'Rienzi' from the English publisher, for which they paid a liberal sum. The Harpers had also received an advance copy by the same packet, there being no steamers in those days; then came the rivalry to see who would first supply the market with early copies. Mr. Hart says that on the day it was received, they distributed the sheets of this advance copy among twelve different printers, in order to produce the book before the Harpers put theirs on the market; and by nine o'clock the next morning the sheets of the whole edition were delivered to the binders, who had the cases already made in shape for binding. That same afternoon, 500 complete copies were forwarded to New York booksellers by the mail stage, the only conveyance by which they could reach New York by daylight the following morning, and this could be accomplished by hiring all the passenger seats. Mr. Hart was the only passenger of the stage that morning, the remaining space in the coach being taken up with Bulwer's 'Rienzi.' The volume was for sale in all the New York bookstores one day earlier than Harper's editions of the same work."

This activity, much as it may reflect the enterprise and haste for which Americans are so famous, can only be called publishing by some exercise of charity. The professional publisher, that is, the man who sought new books and developed new authors, was still the rarity. Matthew Carey, as has been seen, took an interest in publishing and issuing books of American authorship (which were protected under the American copyright law of 1790), but Harpers and the many other firms in the book trade at the time must be considered primarily printers of English books.

In 1838 a young man became associated with the firm of John Wiley, booksellers, whose name was to become one of the most honored in the whole annals of book publishing on both sides of the Atlantic—George Palmer Putnam. Certainly no other one man achieved so great a purpose as George Palmer Putnam who worked for so many years both here and in England for the international copyright law, a cause which was not to be won until about twenty years after his death. It was Mr. Putnam, too, to whom credit is given by many historians for the institution of royalty payment. In 1844 he proposed to Elizabeth Barrett to issue her poems in New York at his own risk and give her ten per cent of the profit. Whether Putnam was the first to use it or not, it is certainly conceded by all that royalty payment is an American invention. At first a percentage of the profits was given the author. As time went on, this percentage was reckoned on the retail price of the book. Still later the percentage was graduated, the author receiving correspondingly larger percentages as the sales of the book mounted.

Daniel Appleton is another famous name in the book trade of the 1800's. D. Appleton was in business as a bookseller in New York in 1825 having moved to that city from Boston seven years before. After a few year's experience as a bookseller, Appleton made the step to publisher by issuing one or two little books of devotion which had enormous success. While Appleton in no way competed with the Careys or the Harpers, he gradually added titles to his list of books and ac-

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\*Boynton, Henry Walcott, "Annals of American Bookselling." 1638-1850. John Wiley & Sons, Inc. New York. 1932.



quired American editions of English books of a religious or scientific nature which escaped the ruthless competition which the English novels provoked on this side.

Boston, meanwhile, continued to be active in the book trade. Charles Little started the firm which was to become in 1847, Little, Brown & Co. At first specializing in law books, Little, Brown & Co. is now one of the outstanding firms in the field of general publishing in the United States. The original Houghton, Henry O., also came to Boston in the mid-nineteenth century. His firm merged in 1878 with James R. Osgood's firm. Osgood and his partners, while their names are no longer familiar, represented some of the finest publishing of their time. The amalgamation of Houghton and the Osgood house combined in one organization the very best New England tradition both in their editors and their authors.

#### (c) The Post Civil War Years.

When the Civil War broke out the House of Harper, then in the hands of the brothers John, Wesley, James and Fletcher, was actually one of the most successful publishing businesses in the world.

The firm of D. Appleton which was carried on by his sons continued to prosper. Between 1860 and 1890 the firm saw great changes which turned the old, personally conducted, business into a large extensive enterprise.

In 1850, Charles Scribner founded the firm which in 1878 became known as Charles Scribner's Sons.

Dodd, Mead, originally a religious house, was founded in the last decades of the nineteenth century.

Henry Holt began his long tenure as head of the firm bearing his name, a tenure which was not ended until his death in 1926.

Indeed, the years following the Civil War witnessed an enormous growth in the American publishing industry. In 1880 the number of new books published was about 2,000, nearly three times as many as in 1853, whereas the population of the country had only doubled in that time.

The earliest branch of an English firm in this country was the Macmillan agency, started immediately after the Civil War by George Edward Brett. It separated from the English house in 1896 and became a separate corporation, soon to be one of the largest houses in the country.

#### (d) The International Copyright Law of 1891.

George Haven Putnam had carried on the good work begun by his father in his fight for literary protection between the countries, and, in 1891, the first international copyright law was passed. This law had a tremendous effect upon American publishing. For one thing, English works now being subject to the same payment as native works, American authors could compete on equal basis. No longer were American works largely regarded as stop gaps by American publishers.

The changes which this law brought were felt almost instantly in the development of the American novel. In the 1890's there arose many new publishing houses determined only to publish works of American authorship and literary merit. Among these were Stone and Kimball, in Chicago, the partners having met at Harvard. Way and Williams was another new Chicago firm. Copeland and

Day, in Boston, was a third new house. It is a sad commentary that none of these experimental young houses survived the turn of the century. Nevertheless, their contribution toward better book design—Stone and Kimball, for example, employed such artists as Toulouse-Lautrec and Pissaro—made itself felt and the physical appearance of American books improved in the new century.

Even so hasty a survey as this cannot pass over the name of Frank Nelson Doubleday who, after working for Scribner's for twenty years, joined forces with Samuel McClure to found the great house now known as Doubleday & Company. In turn this firm served as the training ground for Stanley Rinehart and John Farrar who, in the face of the depression of 1929, opened their own offices and achieved instant success with the publication of "Anthony Adverse." Another graduate of Doubleday is Alfred Knopf who started his business in the prosperous pre-depression years, years which also saw the founding of Simon and Schuster, the Viking Press, William Morrow, W. W. Norton, and the Vanguard Press. In 1933 the now fabulously successful firm of Reynal and Hitchcock opened its doors. Eugene Reynal had formerly been connected with Harper's and Curtice Hitchcock with Macmillan.

It has now been shown how the publishing scene is one that is constantly shifting, with frequent changes in firm names, the rise of young and vital firms, the hardy persistence of the older houses. If this picture does nothing else, it at least demonstrates that the general considerations which determine publishing success remain unchanged. If the publisher were to concentrate too closely on what he judged the public wanted, he would soon cease to be a publisher at all and would become merely a distributor of a few dull and commonplace products. On the other hand, if idealism is untempered by realism, the result is the transitory firms like the experimentalists of the '90's.

### III. Kinds of Publishing.

#### (a) Trade Publishing.

Trade publishing refers to all forms of commercial publishing where the main means of distribution is the bookstore catering to the general public.

#### (b) College and Textbook Publishing.

There is a substantial proportion of large and very successful publishers who deal in nothing but textbooks for all school levels. These publishers are particularly interested in persons who have specialized in academic subjects in which they may be regarded as "experts." A heavy academic background of courses in Education and Teaching is also tremendously helpful.

#### (c) University Presses.

As the name implies, these are publishing houses maintained under the auspices of universities. Since there are funds at the disposal of the university presses for that purpose, they are able to publish books of highly specialized subjects with small and inaccessible markets which the trade publisher could not possibly handle with profit.

#### (d) Reprint Publishing.

This is one of the most interesting aspects of modern publishing and heated arguments are in progress currently as to how the reprint houses will affect the



older, original publishers. It is the reprint publisher who is opening hitherto untapped markets in chain stores, newsstands, small-town drug stores, etc. The fact still remains that there must be books written and published by the regular publisher in order for these reprint and paper-back and twenty-five cent books to exist. In the main, everything that can be said about job opportunities in publishing of a general nature, may also be said of reprint houses, although in the latter the emphasis is naturally on sales and sales problems, promotion and merchandising.

#### (e) Technical Books, Specialized Publishing.

Under this heading can be included law book publishers, medical book publishers, religious book publishers, and publishers of technical books. There are many houses which operate extremely successful businesses which are not ordinarily known to the general public and which hold out excellent opportunities for the astute man or woman wishing to make a career of publishing.

The following, quoted from Henry Boynton's excellent book, "Annals of American Bookselling," makes this point very clear:—

"A president of The Macmillan Company remarked that 'the most inclusive new feature of the century seems to be the tendency of our larger publishers to widen the class of their publications so as to include school, technical and medical books. For in such books rather than in miscellaneous publications seem to lie at present the surest financial rewards of the publisher.' Since that was said the rapid increase in scientific knowledge and technical invention has doubled and redoubled the output of technical books till they have reached a scale of which the purely literary writer and reader have no conception. The book review departments of the magazines and the newspapers deal almost entirely with the 'miscellaneous publications,' the books of fiction, poetry, biography, in which the gamble of publishing lies. Meanwhile a great and successful book industry goes on, untouched by these organs of criticism and opinion, untroubled by the problems of the publisher of belles-lettres, or the speculator in 'best-sellers.'"

#### IV. Personal Qualifications.

First and foremost, if one is planning to make book publishing his life work, he must be an inveterate reader. He cannot start at too young an age to read. While a college degree is important in securing the job in the first place, it is not going to stand a person in very good stead if it is not backed by some very solid reading in the classics.

In college the courses to emphasize are the literature courses, those journalism courses which have to do with proofreading, printing and type, and writing. A major in English or American literature with a minor in history, economics, or political science, forms a very good academic background. But, and this cannot be reiterated too often, the absolutely vital requisite is a wide acquaintance with the literature of all countries. This means that one will have had to do a great deal more reading than can possibly have been done during a college course. A good piece of advice would be, don't enter publishing if reading isn't enjoyed. One who enters publishing will be doing an inordinate amount of it the rest of his life.

Very helpful experience may be secured by working on high school and college

publications—the newspaper, if there is one, and the annual. One should try his hand, also, at original writing of some kind and not skimp on rhetoric courses. An unassailable foundation of English grammar is necessary.

Familiarity with another language is very helpful.

In addition to this academic background, one should have a pleasant personality and an ability to handle people with tact and understanding and, above all, patience. A lively curiosity should also be possessed about what is going on in the world, for few other businesses are as sensitive to the political situation, the theatre, the movies, the press.

Above all, one should have literary taste, and literary taste is not something with which a person is born. It is developed.

## V. Remuneration.

In discussing remuneration, no better comment can be offered than that made by William H. Ellsworth in his book of reminiscences, "A Golden Age of Authors." Mr. Ellsworth, for forty years closely associated with The Century Company, writes: "Nobody should seek to be a publisher unless he loves books and wants to have to do with them. If one wants to make money, let him go into the steel business or into something in which there is money to be made, for there is very little in books and magazines unless they are pushed in a purely commercial spirit, and if they are—why, then it were much better not to publish them at all."

There are no recent studies of salaries and wages in the book publishing industry available, and hence only generalizations can be made which are perhaps open to dispute. As far, however, as the writer has been able to determine in talking with a number of men and women in New York publishing houses, the following seems to be as nearly accurate as it is possible to be:—

There has always been, and probably always will be, a great many more persons eager to get into publishing than there are jobs to be had. Obviously, this must make for a low salary level. Not only are there fewer jobs because the industry is comparatively small, but because very few people ever leave their jobs once they have attained what has long been their goal.

It is possible to make two arbitrary classifications of positions; namely, "service" and "creative" jobs.

### (a) Service Jobs.

In the case of "service jobs," that is, typists, stenographers, clerks, etc., on the whole wages for these jobs compare favorably with those elsewhere in the business world in like positions. Even here, however, there is a tendency toward lower rates because ambitious young men and women regard these jobs, and often rightly, as opening wedges for larger, more interesting positions.

### (b) Creative Jobs.

As to "creative jobs," by which is meant editors, publicity writers, copywriters, readers, artists and designers, and so on, it is fair to say that the salaries are in no way equal to salaries in, say, the advertising business or in magazine publishing for comparable talents and ability. They are, from bottom to top, a great deal lower in book publishing. While it is not unusual for a successful advertising executive to make \$50,000 or \$75,000 a year, and even for copywriters frequently to

make \$15,000 or \$25,000, in the the book business salaries in these brackets are the exception.

Publishing is, nevertheless, a challenging business. There is a sense of belonging to a great and respected tradition which it is one's privilege to continue. There is a tremendous stimulation in coming in contact with some of the keenest minds and the most arresting personalities of one's generation. There is a satisfaction in dealing with ideas and words, rather than transitory and ephemeral merchandise. If these intangibles mean more to one than material gain, then publishing is that person's business!

## VI. Opportunities for Women.

While women occupy every important position in publishing—editor, sales manager, publicity director, etc.—they still receive smaller salaries than the men in like positions in book publishing. There have been some highly successful women in publishing, but it has taken them longer, they have had to work harder, and they have had to have comparatively more ability, to get to the top than men.

It is to be hoped that this inequality will gradually be eliminated, but the publisher is generally a conservative man and slow to recognize change. Any woman, however, with real ability and ambition can make her place in the book world.

## VII. Chances of Advancement and Job Opportunities.

There are in publishing firms jobs for accountants and jobs for filing clerks and typists and billers which are very much like the same jobs in a dress manufacturer's plant or a building contractor's office. In the publishing firm the same skills are required. The only reason these jobs are interesting in this discussion is that they may, as has been said, lead to more interesting, "creative" jobs. There is a great deal to be said for being on the spot. Not only is one learning the terminology and procedures of publishing, but he is in the handy position of being able to hound the powers in charge into extending a chance when some job opens up which will bring one nearer the goal.

In this connection, it might be pointed out that the smaller houses are frequently better for this purpose than the larger houses. Whereas in a large firm, often highly departmentalized, the biller or the clerk who checks the galleys or the typist in the stenographic pool may be sitting several floors away from the editorial offices, in the small house she or he may be called upon to fill in in all sorts of capacities and, as knowledge is acquired, advancement may well be a great deal speedier.

The following is a list of preferred jobs in book publishing:—

### (a) The Editorial Department.

#### (1) Editor.

In an institutional advertisement in the *Saturday Review of Literature* (September 8, 1945), Henry Holt and Company discuss the interesting question, "What is an Editor?" Unfortunately, space does not permit quoting this excellent little essay in full, but the following condensation will serve to make the point:—

"An editor is a man with a finger to the wind. He reads all important periodicals and newspapers and when he thinks a book on a certain subject is needed he tries to find the best person to write it.



"An editor is a man who likes to read, and a good thing, too. He must be on speaking terms with all notable and all best-selling books currently published.

"An editor is a man of hope. He reads from ten to fifty manuscripts in a week; less than one per cent of them is ever published by his house. He is also courageous and tactful, for he must reject the rest of those manuscripts, often face to face with the author, and give the honest reasons.

"An editor is a man with a gregarious mind and a tender regard for human nature. He works sympathetically with any number of his firm's authors, no two alike, writers being more individualistic than most people.

"An editor is a plastic surgeon to books by 'unprofessional' writers. Book-writing these days, unlike a century ago, isn't limited to people trained in literary matters. Let someone devise a new way of erecting chicken houses or let him live six months in a Persian village, and the result is a book—full of facts, true—but not always too well written. That's where the editor comes in.

"An editor is a businessman. He arranges contracts with authors and author's agents.

"An editor is a gambling man. He will recommend that his firm publish the first, the second, and even the third book by an author, knowing full well that they will lose money. The editor is putting his chips on the books his author will write a decade or more hence. The editor must also steel himself for the author's disappointment; whatever form of reviling or despair it may take, he must comfort and encourage him.

"The editor is a detail man. When he isn't on the job, the heroine's eyes can change color in the course of a novel, and characters can change their names without benefit of court decision, and the *New Yorker* can add to its voluminous files testifying to the danger of infatuation with one's own words. Why, then, be an editor? There are only a few whose patient and often inspired work with talented writers has brought them, the editors, out of the anonymity of their common lot. There are more hazards, disappointments, and weary hours to this job than one likes to count.

"Editors have their compensations. When our friend the manufacturing man comes upstairs with the first copy of a book that's just off the press, he's always going to the editor whose baby it is and saying, 'How do you like it?' The editor reaches for it with a glint in his eye and says, 'Let's see it.' And they stand there, both of them, admiring it, like a couple of fools."

## (2) Junior Editor or Assistant Editor.

Of course, a person doesn't become an editor the first year out of school, indeed one doesn't become the man or woman who is described in the above quotation without having served a long apprenticeship. This apprenticeship consists in doing the same work the editor is doing, but on a lower level of authority and under someone's direction. A junior editor, or assistant editor, or editorial assistant—usually the job has been evolved from lesser jobs and the struggling learner remains in a fairly ambiguous position—reads manuscripts (See "Reader," Page 16), answers an inordinate number of inquiries of the "how do I publish a book" variety and writes an endless number of "decline" letters to accompany the return of unaccepted manuscripts. The assistant editor

may be called upon to check proof or run errands or even in a pinch to re-type a manuscript which has been thrown back by the printer as unfit for setting. He willingly does every job that comes his way because he knows that is the way to learn, and if he has looked about him, he knows he has a staggering amount to learn.

### (3) Reader.

Some publishers employ a "first reader" who does nothing but read manuscripts. This reader goes through the manuscript with sufficient care to be able to write a 150 or 200 word synopsis of the plot (and woe to the reader whose carelessness causes him to place the setting in Texas when it should have been in Florida!). The report is then completed with a paragraph or two stating why the book is unpublishable, saying that it is too amateurish, that the plot is incredible, the characterization wooden, and so on. If there is the slightest doubt on the reader's part, the manuscript is recommended for "further consideration."

If the manuscript is of a specialized nature, that, too, is indicated so it can be sent out to be read by a specialist in the field, if such additional consideration is merited.

Not all publishers employ first readers. In such houses, this initial going-over is done by the editors themselves. A few publishers employ outside, freelance, readers who read at home. This can be considered part-time work at best; not even the most highly valued "advisers" to the publisher consider this a sole means of livelihood.

### (4) Copyeditor and Proofreader.

The copyeditor's job is a highly specialized one. The good copyeditor is an extremely valuable man or woman in any publishing house and his skill and efficiency represent years of careful training. It is his job to prepare the manuscript for the printer. This not only means making the spelling, punctuation and capitalization uniform and correct throughout the manuscript, but it also means verifying all facts, dates, quotations, and name-spelling. The copyeditor queries the use of copyrighted material and sees that the author has secured permission for its appearance. He checks bibliographies, indexes, sources of illustrations.

It is also the copyeditor who undertakes, in some houses, that portion of the editor's job which Henry Holt's advertisement ascribes to the editor. (See "Editor," Page 14). In other words, it is the copyeditor who catches the slips and errors in the manuscript which would otherwise cause the author—and the publisher—much embarrassment.

To be a copyeditor one must, then, be a demon for detail and possess a deep and abiding hatred for carelessness. It is a job which takes unending patience and a keen, academic mind.

The proofreader has less responsibility. In most cases the proofreader does not presume to change copy. He must, however, also have a careful and efficient mind and he must develop the habit of concentration. The proofreader's duty is to check printer's proof against the manuscript, to catch typographical errors and lapses of uniformity in capitalization, punctuation and spelling.



**(b) The Juvenile Department.**

A very interesting phase of publishing is the juvenile or children's book field. Here women indubitably outshine men. The heads of Juvenile Departments in general publishing firms are usually women who have gained their experience in the field as librarians or teachers. But many successful juvenile editors today rose to that preferred position through assistant editorships. The assistant to the juvenile editor must have a good knowledge of and love for children's books. She must have a keen artistic sense, for in children's books there is always a great deal more art work, of course, than in general trade books. The juvenile editor and her assistant must know book manufacturing processes, for she must know what is possible and what is a ridiculous request to make of the printer.

**(c) The Publicity Department.**

The primary function of the publicity department is to disseminate news about books. It is a very important part of bookselling. This department is responsible for seeing that advance copies of each book are sent to the proper book reviewers. They must know what is newsworthy about each book and to what particular public the book will be interesting. It is extremely important to have books as widely reviewed as possible and the good publicity department is the one which is securing wide coverage on the publisher's books. They can do nothing about securing *good* reviews for books, for that is in the hands of the reviewers themselves, but they can make every effort to see that the book gets to the proper person.

There is a great deal of detail involved in this effort and most heads of Publicity Departments have assistants to take over this detail. Here, therefore, is a good place for a young man or woman to get a start if he or she is interested in the publicity end of publishing.

Turning over this tiresome detail to his or her assistant, the publicity director is thus free to cultivate the friendship of the reviewers, the radio commentators, the newspaper columnists and anyone else who may be able to help get the author and the book before the public. Radio appearances are planned, photographers often request the privilege of photographing the author at work (usually with a pipe grasped firmly between his teeth), the author patting his dog, the author signing his contract, etc., etc. All this the patient publicity director arranges. In the meantime the author must be wine and dined and every effort must be made to help him enjoy the pleasures of having his book published.

The publicity director, if time allows, will write the news releases which must be constantly flowing toward the reviewers' and the columnists' desks. These releases give news of forthcoming books, interesting bits of gossip about authors, information about public appearances of authors, and so on. Often, however, it is impossible for the head of the department to write these releases and here is a chance where the assistant may get some valuable experience and also have the satisfaction of seeing something he or she has written (usually greatly emasculated because of lack of space) appear in print.

#### (d) The Advertising Department.

##### (1) The Copywriter.

The copywriter in a publishing house does exactly the same job that a copywriter in an advertising firm or a department store does. He writes and prepares copy for the newspapers and other media. In addition, it is usually his job to plan posters for bookstore display. The copywriter works very closely indeed with the sales department and the publicity department. Every book has a plan of promotional strategy laid out for it before it is published and the copywriter executes these plans insofar as the paid advertising is concerned. It might be noted in this connection that recently some very interesting experimentation has been done in regard to the potentialities of radio advertising, and no doubt this form of advertising will ultimately be accepted as a part of the advertising appropriation.

##### (2) The Blurb Writer.

Every publisher seems to have his own way of handling this tremendously important function. The blurb is, of course, the printed copy which appears on the inside flaps and the back of book jackets. Usually the same copy, slightly changed, is used in the Announcement Catalogs, the seasonal catalogs which tell of the forthcoming books on the publisher's list. The blurb is a very special form of writing, for it must enthusiastically recommend the book to the person who casually picks it up in the bookstore without actually giving away the plot or telling too much of the story. In large publishing firms there is a separate person who does nothing but write blurbs connected either with the Advertising or the Publicity Departments. This job not only entails the writing of the blurbs but necessitates considerable rushing back and forth between the Sales Department, the editor whose special responsibility the book is, and the Publicity Department for approvals and information. He must also submit his writing to the author and prevent that anxious parent from completely defeating the purpose of the blurb by well-meant suggestions. The blurb writer, also, in most cases, takes care of the photograph of the author and the biographical material which will appear on the jacket and also be distributed to the reviewers.

In smaller houses the blurbs are usually written by someone in the Publicity or Advertising or even Editorial Department and this job goes along with other duties.

##### (3) The Circular Writer.

Many books of a specialized nature must have circulars prepared for their exploitation. These circulars are sent out through mailings by the publisher or they can be turned over to the bookstores who will distribute them through their own mailing lists or as fillers with monthly statements. Circulars in many cases have illustrations. Copy is prepared and layouts made after reading the book, material from the copywriter and the blurb writer is incorporated, comment from favorable reviews is used, biographical material on the author is included.

In smaller houses, again, this job is combined with other jobs and is handled by the copywriter or the publicity department or one of the editors.

### (e) The Mail Order Department.

An aspect of advertising and promotion which is becoming more and more important in the distribution of books is the Mail Order Department. As the name implies, this department sells books entirely by mail. They have on file or purchase lists of names of persons of special categories, persons with special interests. There are lists of lawyers, doctors, nurses, teachers. There are lists of amateur photographers, gardeners, ministers. The Mail Order Department must know the right lists to use in selling an outdoor book, a "self-help" book, "how-to-do" books of various kinds. Records are kept showing the returns from each mailing and careful graphs are made which tell the Mail Order Department how sales of certain books have responded to certain lists. From this is learned the most efficacious way to use lists of prospective customers.

The mailing itself usually consists of a mimeographed or multigraphed letter, a circular on the book, and an order card which can be returned postage free. In special instances it is possible that each letter may be typed individually, if the price of the book and the nature of the promotion warrants this personal note.

The director of a Mail Order Department in a large publishing firm must have several assistants to help in keeping records and to write the promotion letter. Here is a very good place for a beginner to start his career and gain some valuable publishing experience.

### (f) The Sales Department.

The Sales Department is headed by the Sales Manager. He is a man who has behind him an impressive body of experience in the book trade. He is a man who must not only know book markets but must work closely with the Editorial Department which is selecting books for publication and, as has been pointed out, with the Advertising and the Publicity Departments. In a sense he is the court of last appeal, for if he and his department believe a book won't sell (and it has no other visible reason for acceptance, such as the promise which it holds for the future of the author or its prestige value) it will not be included on the list of a firm whose first duty is to show a year-end profit. If the Sales Department feels a jacket is terrible or the publicity is all wrong or the advertising fails to get across what should be said about the book, its vote is very likely to be the decisive one.

One important factor in the success of a publishing house is its "back-list." This means the books which stay in print year after year, perhaps not commanding enormous sales, but nevertheless very much in demand. Not only, therefore, must the Sales Manager watch over the new books constantly being published, but he must also know when to order reprintings on older titles, when to let a title go out of print, when a book is to be "remaindered."

The Sales Manager must also protect the good will of his firm with its customers, the book stores and the reading public. There is, in a word, no more important link in the chain which is the evolution of a manuscript into a book which finally reaches the hands of its reader than the Sales Department.

The Sales Manager is assisted, of course, by a staff of salesmen. Most



salesmen travel, covering many states and seeing many bookstores on each trip. They make new friends on each of these trips and meet again their old ones. They know that each book has to be handled by itself, that it will present its own special sales problem. Book salesmen, quite as much as any other member of the firm's organization, must have a respect for books and they must bring to their selling their own personal feeling about books in general and each book in particular. Salesmen, too, must love to read, for they will have had to read their own titles and also have a good working knowledge of the book market in general. Most of all, they must have the friendship and trust of their customers. Bookselling is not a high-pressure job where the product can be rammed down a protesting victim's throat.

**(g) The Manufacturing Department (also called Production Department).**

While one is sometimes inclined to think of the manufacturing of books as a "service" department, rather than a "creative" department, there is actually no more creative aspect of the development of the book than its physical appearance. Publishing houses are known for having beautiful books or having simply quite ordinary books. The Manufacturing Department takes care not only of the design of the book, but watches over its entire journey to and from the printers as manuscripts, galleys, page proofs, sheets, and finally, the finished book. The Manufacturing Department keeps vast and detailed record about the state of completion of every book at every moment. It also keeps records of the plates from which the book has been made and which are stored until the publisher gives the word that the book has no more demand and the plates may be destroyed. There are innumerable things which the Manufacturing Department must take care of and because of this detail and its consequent demand for clerical help, it is a good place in which to begin a publishing career.

**VIII. Allied Fields.**

There are many jobs in industries closely associated with publishing for which experience in the book trade will stand one in good stead. There is, in other words, a good deal of movement back and forth among the employees of the below-mentioned businesses and publishing.

**(a) The Motion Pictures.\***

The large motion picture companies maintain Story Departments, both in New York and in Hollywood. These departments keep in very close touch with the activities of the magazine and book worlds. They have staffs of readers whose job it is to read current fiction and write reports which are read by the producers and executives. These reports consist of a long and detailed summary of the plot of the book, together with some editorial comment as to its suitability or non-suitability for movie adaptation. An astonishing number of persons in this particular phase of motion pictures reached there via the magazine and book publishing route.

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\*See also Monograph No. 52, "The Motion Picture Industry," of this series of Vocational and Professional Monographs.

**(b) The Magazines.**

Magazines are even closer to books than the motion pictures. The same qualifications and types of experience are required within both categories. The emphasis in magazines is naturally much more popular and timely than in books, and the magazine editor must have an eye for good subjects and ideas for articles, as well as a keen judgment in fiction. Again, the salaries on the whole are higher and the chances for advancement greater and quicker in magazines than in the book trade. It is said that there are to be over one hundred new magazines put on the market very soon, now that paper restrictions are lifted, and the magazine field is one which bears consideration.

**(c) Book Clubs.**

In addition to the two great book clubs, The Book-of-the-Month Club and the Literary Guild, there are some smaller book clubs, and there will probably be more as time goes on. There are book clubs specializing in religious books, in scientific books, in detective books. The interchange between book clubs and publishers is close and book clubs should not be forgotten in an examination of the employment opportunities of persons interested in books.

**(d) Literary Agents.**

The literary agent is becoming more and more important in the publishing world. A literary agent's function is to bring together author and publisher. From the publisher's point of view, the literary agent's *raison d'être* is the "screening" of the manuscripts which he sees, retaining for submission those which he thinks most salable or which he believes show writers of promise. From the author's point of view, the literary agent presumably is able to secure better terms for his work and to know more about market possibilities than any author can know on his own. The literary agent watches over the financial affairs of his client and looks after his radio rights, motion picture rights, first and second serialization rights, etc. He must also have a knowledge of legal matters.

**(e) Advertising Agencies\*, Public Relations Counsels.\*\***

Experience with a book publishing firm is usually a recommendation for either of these fields, particularly, of course, with firms who specialize in advertising or publicizing books and magazines. More and more publishers are turning over the advertising and publicity on their books to outside specialists and, again, the relationship between publishing opportunities and jobs in advertising agencies and "press agents" is close.

**(f) Literary Departments of Newspapers.\*\*\***

On the whole, the difficulties of getting into the literary department of a newspaper are, if anything, even greater than getting into a publishing house.

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\*See also Monograph No. 24, "Advertising," of this series of Vocational and Professional Monographs.

\*\*See also Monograph No. 58, "Public Relations," of this series of Vocational and Professional Monographs.

\*\*\*See also Monograph No. 2, "Journalism," of this series of Vocational and Professional Monographs.



While book departments of newspapers (and magazines) should not be overlooked, there is not too much hope in this quarter for the novice.

### (g) Bookstores.

Bookstores provide excellent training for anyone interested in book publishing. Not only is it in the long tradition for the publishing house to develop from booksellers as has been seen in the history of book publishing, but many great publishers began their careers as salesmen. On the whole, however, there is not much traffic the other way, since the remuneration in the retail selling end of the book trade is smaller than in the publishing end.

## IX. What's Ahead?

The following is a condensation of an article which appeared in *Publishers' Weekly*, September 1, 1945, (Vol. 148, No. 9). This article, containing, as it does, comments of outstanding publishers, gives the best possible picture of the outlook for the book trade in the post-war period.

Simon and Schuster, the twenty-year-old publishing firm who has so consistently blazed new trails in the industry since their debut with the famous Cross Word Puzzle books, feel the future is very bright. In a recent advertisement in *Publishers' Weekly* they made this comment: "Essandess (Simon and Schuster) has always proceeded on the theory that book publishing was a sleeping giant. . . . During the past 20 years we have seen that giant occasionally talk in his sleep. The next ten years should see the real awakening. . . ." The firm foresees better books made more cheaply, retailing becoming more prosperous, book clubs prospering.

Douglas Black, vice-president of Doubleday, Doran, one of the largest publishers in the world, also sees an immediate expansion in the book business. He said: "The book industry is presented with a challenging opportunity for further extending and amplifying its means of distribution to meet the needs of the rapidly growing reading public."

Frank MacGregor, president of Harper and Brothers said: "We all know that the reading of books has increased enormously in the past few years and it stands to reason much of this will carry over into the more normal years ahead. And that means that publishers look for an expanded market over the prewar years, with consequent increase in employment and production. In fact, it would seem that the product of our industry has a future that knows no bounds."

Ben D. Zevin, president of the powerful reprint publishers, The World Publishing Co., of Cleveland, whose Tower and Forum Series have leaped to the fore in cheap book publishing, comments enthusiastically on their plans for postwar competition in this field. A hopeful note is sounded by Mr. Zevin for the young beginner. He says, "To facilitate these plans, it is clear that our personnel requirements will increase by 25 per cent within the next year and that our production requirements will grow by at least 50 per cent . . . We are in an intensely fascinating and exciting business which, in the years ahead, will make progress only in direct relation to the vision and imagination of the men who are engaged in it."

Lovell Thompson, manager of the Trade Department of Houghton Mifflin, is more cautious. He says: "I have heard of a dozen different plans: new magazines,

new low-priced book series, new book clubs, etc. The competition within the trade is going to be very stiff now, and the expansion of the book market that these new plans envisage will not occur—I should think that dollar books and 75¢ books would suffer . . . What we will need principally, is very young men to break into publishing, but we won't want these men for a few years . . . But I don't think there is an enormous expansion coming, and I don't think it is going to be a wide open cinch."

In the juvenile and technical fields the comments from important persons were on the whole of cheery optimism.

While no doubt this expansion of the industry will adjust the lower salary levels that now exist, it will probably always be true that the book trade is a profession where the compensations will be other than primarily financial. Nevertheless, for the person who feels a special kinship with books, we can think of no kinder fate than to be a member of a respected publishing house.

#### X. Professional Organizations in the Book Trade.

American Booksellers Assn., 35 E. 20th St., New York 3, N. Y.

American Institute of Graphic Arts, 115 E. 40th St., New York 16, N. Y.

Book Manufacturers' Institute, 25 W. 43rd St., New York 18, N. Y.

Book Publishers Bureau, Inc., 347 5th Ave., New York 16, N. Y.

#### XI. Professional Publications.

*The Publishers' Weekly*. R. R. Bowker Co., 62 W. 45th St., New York, N. Y.

*The Retail Bookseller* (Monthly). The Baker & Taylor Co., 55 Fifth Avenue, New York, N. Y.

*American News Trade Journal* (Monthly). American News Co., 131 Varick St., New York, N. Y.

*Saturday Review of Literature* (Weekly), 420 Madison Avenue, New York, N. Y.

See also the Literary Supplements of the Sunday newspapers, such as the *New York Times Book Review*; *Books*; *New York Herald Tribune*. Most large metropolitan newspapers throughout the country have important Sunday book sections.

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